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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0189  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0319  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USNATO 000315

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SUBJECT: ONDCP DIRECTOR WALTERS' MAY 8 COUNTERNARCOTICS  
DISCUSSIONS AT NATO HQ

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Richard G. Olson, for reasons 1.  
4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During separate May 8 meetings at NATO HQ with select Permanent Representatives and Deputy Secretary General (D/SYG) Minuto-Rizzo, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy John Walters highlighted the role that security and good governance play in reducing poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, the link between poppy cultivation and insurgency funding, and the need for the international community to do more to bring down the large traffickers in Afghanistan, who profit from the trade on the backs of small farmers. PermReps were generally supportive, but questioned how not to alienate the average Afghan through eradication, with the Netherlands advocating for providing alternative livelihoods, and following an Afghan government lead. The D/SYG commented that the Afghan counternarcotics strategy had improved over the past few years, but that corruption and general governing incapacity hampered the Afghan effort. Both Director Walters and the D/SYG agreed on the need to harmonize the different, ongoing international efforts in Afghanistan; the D/SYG noted that NATO's "comprehensive approach" aims to enable NATO to work more closely with other international actors. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Director Walters met with Ambassadors from the Netherlands, Italy, Lithuania, and Australia, plus Deputies from the UK, Canada, and Spain in the U.S. Mission on May 8. He thanked them for their solidarity, and for working to make a difference in Afghanistan. Pointing to decreases in poppy cultivation in the north, and troubling increases in the south, he noted that analysis shows where security and governance exist, poppy cultivation has been dramatically decreased. He highlighted a growing consensus that the drug trade has contributed to financing of the OMF (opposing militant forces), and explained how the OMF use it as a means of taxing the local populations, and intertwining their lives with the trade, so that locals are tied to the OMF rather than the Afghan government.

¶3. (C) Looking at where the money from drugs is going in Afghanistan, Director Walters pointed out that small

farmers are not getting rich, but rather, are actually victims of larger forces. He urged the international community to do more to influence the warlords, traffickers, and corrupt government officials, noting that a collective effort is needed to pull together the diverse strands of governance, security, development, and counternarcotics operations (including eradication). The Director noted that attitudes within the U.S. military establishment are changing with regards to counternarcotics, as the link between drugs and the insurgency becomes clearer; he urged international military forces to recognize this link, as well. The Director also pushed back hard against advocacy by organizations such as the Senlis Council that recommend purchase of the poppy crop by the international community, noting that would simply drive subsistence agriculture out of Afghanistan as the drug barons maxed out poppy production and reaped record profits. The Director urged European governments to do more to seek extradition of trafficking suspects from Afghanistan, noting that the Afghan legal structure is still too weak to take effective action against the kingpins and other leaders of the trade, and that the U.S. has had some successes with this tactic both in Afghanistan and elsewhere, such as Colombia.

14. (C) The Australian ambassador agreed with the Director's statements against international purchasing of the Afghan poppy crop. The Dutch ambassador, while recognizing the role of eradication in an overall Afghan counternarcotics strategy, questioned the degree to which NATO should be involved. He highlighted the need for NATO and the international community to follow an Afghan lead, and for aggressive alternative livelihoods programs in areas

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subject to poppy eradication. He drew attention to the need to eradicate poppy in areas that were not under the writ of the Afghan government, in order to avoid the perverse effect of "punishing" loyal provinces, and pushing them toward Taliban "protection" from government forces. The Italian ambassador asked what it would take to get local farmers out of the poppy business, and whether the Taliban had shown signs of morphing from mainly "tax collectors" of drug profits, to become more engaged in the trade, as the FARC in Colombia had done. The Director noted the Taliban appeared to be largely engaging in tax collection, but highlighted the additional dangers to Afghan stability should they begin transforming that role. On getting local farmers out of the trade, he stressed the need for rural development, and balancing economic aid with the risk disincentive of law enforcement and crop eradication.

15. (C) Reinforcing themes addressed earlier with PermReps, Director Walters focused on international cooperation during his meeting with the Deputy Secretary General, and asked D/SYG Minuto-Rizzo for his thoughts on how the efforts of NATO and the international community were progressing, and the way ahead. The D/SYG commented that he was pleased by improvements in the Afghan government's counternarcotics strategy over the past years. Noting that "more NATO should mean fewer drugs," he acknowledged the strong positive correlation between security and reduced poppy cultivation. Agreeing with the Director's observation that the international effort in Afghanistan needed better coordination, the D/SYG pointed to NATO's efforts to codify a "comprehensive approach," which would enable NATO to work better with other international actors, to include organizations as well as NGOs. He highlighted that Afghanistan was very much a multilateral challenge, with NATO having an important piece, but not responsibility for the entire picture.

16. Director Walters party cleared this cable.

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